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A FOUNDATION FOR ANGLICAN SOCIAL THOUGHT
A STUDY OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE,
THOMAS ARNOLD AND FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE

by

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PREFACE

In a very real sense, one can honestly say that the relationship between the man of faith and the structure of society has undergone greater change from the 1830's to the present than from the Fall of Adam to the 1830's. The purpose of this work is to understand and to evaluate the influence of certain nineteenth century figures upon this era of rapid change. I have purposely limited my material to a consideration of three significant Anglican thinkers in order to gain a perspective of the modern ethical guide-lines of my own tradition in preparation for graduate work in Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. I sincerely thank the faculty of the Divinity School for inviting me to undertake this task, the Rev. Dr. John E. Skinner for developing my sensitivity to the theological subtleties of the culture and faith problem, and the Rev. George H. Easter for encouraging my interest in Christian Ethics and for sharing his insights into the depths of nineteenth century Anglican theology while he enthusiastically supervised the development of this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the nineteenth century England was suffering under the anxieties that accompany a time of economic, political, social, and spiritual revolution. In agriculture and industry, the enclosure movement and new inventions respectively contributed to the degrading poverty and the widespread unrest among the masses. These circumstances coupled with the difficulties that are linked to an exhaustive and prolonged war caused a general submergence of beauty, a distain of liberty, a contempt for personality, and an ascending cult of the self. Some men were unwilling to regard these grim developments as ephemeral irrelevances in a process fundamentally benevolent. They realized that political parties as well as Parliament were unrepresentative of the people, that local government was in great need of reform, and that the law itself was antiquated and unjust. The church, like the state, was not prepared for this revolutionary era. Organizationally inadequate in the newly populated industrial and mining areas, the church was incapable and disinclined to evidence any discordance with the vested interests of the obsolete political and social system or to evidence any understanding of the mistaken purposes of men or to suggest in what direction a true regeneration and reconciliation was to be sought. Among those concerned individuals who were unable to accept the recent developments, many allied themselves with the Benthamite school which based its social reform on self-interest. Despite the efforts of men like Robert Owen, the hedonistic, utilitarian, and secular nature of this school of thought was unable to solve

what was basically a problem of the soul. The Benthamite tradition, it seems to me, was unsuccessful primarily due to its inability to get beneath facts and actions to the very meaning of things.

It is my thesis that Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas Arnold, and Frederick Denison Maurice established a valid spiritual and intellectual basis for an enduring doctrine of man and society. I shall demonstrate this proposition by tracing the development of the highly significant effort to reconcile the love of freedom with the love of truth and the persistent desire for intellectual, social, and religious unity as they arise in our three key figures. In this way, one may recognize and understand the general motifs of their work of reconciliation while discovering the nature of the liberalism embodied in their Christian idealism.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

The Essentials of Coleridge's Religious Thought

Truth and Metaphysics

Coleridge has always been recognized as a true genius despite his seemingly constitutional inability to get things done which was complicated by his wretched health and by the taking of opium. Though students of literature speculate with great regret about what he might have done, it occurs to me that students of theology should seek to apprehend the vision that the romantic and sensitive Coleridge suggests in his works. Basically, he was a liberal-minded conservative who could say that the task of "the inspired is to reconcile the struggles of the infinitely various finite with the permanent".¹ He would conserve all that was valuable in tradition without restraining the mind in its duty to determine the relative worth of the old. He consistently stated that his purpose and method in writing were to stimulate others to think and to remove prejudices. He insisted on one's "responsibility as a moral agent," as possessed with the "power of thinking connectedly", and especially as envisioning "the scheme and purpose of the Redemption by Christ."²

In the Aids to Reflection, Coleridge clearly indicates that theology was the foundation for all study: "It is the glory of

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1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Friend, New York, 1853, p.526.
 2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Aids to Reflection, New York, Harper, 1853, p.111.

the Gospel charter and the Christian constitution that its author and head is the Spirit of truth, essential Reason as well as absolute and incomprehensible Will."³ Here was the enduring and living reality which was the source of all power. Truth, the substance beneath the forms which could be grasped by the senses, was in its essence spiritual. Since God is identified with the highest truth by Coleridge, we realize that the ultimate object of his search was God. Man's glory lay in his ability to apprehend the revealed truth and to be a willing subject to revelation. Coleridge called the operating forces of truth either "laws", "principles", or "ideas". They were living, life-producing, spiritual forces which dwelt in the mind. Their association with an act of will differentiated these realities from mere conceptions or opinions.⁴ In short, it seems to me that Coleridge felt his major task was to persuade men that the truth upon which the universe rested was not the result of man's intellectualization, but that it was an invisible, immutable, infinite, and eternal force revealing a living God.

As James Boulger has noted, Coleridge stopped being merely a poet of romantic imagination when he became a religious thinker with post-Kantian metaphysical interests.⁵ Since the highest truth was metaphysical as well as spiritual, man's desire to search for this truth would not go unrewarded if he developed a

3. Ibid... p.200.

4. Ibid... p.219ff.

5. James D. Boulger, Coleridge as a Religious Thinker, New Haven, 1961, p.219.

philosophical temperament and sound principle of action. With this in mind he said: "...my object is to draw the attention of my countrymen, as far as in me lies, from expedients and short sighted tho' quicksighted Experience, to that grand algebra of our moral nature, Principle and Principles in public as in private life, in criticism, ethics, and religion".⁶ Since man is made in the image of God and partook of the infinite, Coleridge believed that a metaphysical method was justified in explaining those existent truths the evidence of which was not derived from the senses and in penetrating the whole, unalloyed truth. Setting the tone for Arnold and Maurice, he boldly declares: "He, who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."⁷ It is most significant to recognize that while Coleridge realized that thinking was a difficult art and often was contained by divine mysteries, it was not an exercise "inseparable from the character of a Christian."⁸ He felt the need to Catholicize Protestantism without separating Protestantism from its confidence in the power and the right to inquire. (5)

Closer examination of his understanding of metaphysics indicates that Coleridge sharply differentiated between the proper and improper methods, ends, and attitudes of metaphysical thought. Transcendental metaphysics was the definite preference, for it was "exclusively the realm of pure philosophy" and not at all (6)

6. Friend, op.cit., pp.532,538.

7. Aids, op.cit., p.173

8. Aids, op.cit., p.123.

associated with mere reflection or lawless speculation.⁹ In order to establish his transcendental metaphysics on an energetic but a justifiable use of the human faculties, he draws a distinction between enthusiasm and fanaticism. "The absorption of the individual in the object contemplated from the vividness or intensity of his conceptions and convictions", was Coleridge's description of enthusiasm. This healthy confrontation was sorely (7) needed in an era that failed to see beneath the surface of its own irrational and unjust structure. Fanaticism was an attitude characteristic of the crowd or mob; it was "heat, or accumulation and direction, of feeling acquired by contagion, and relying on the sympathy of sect or confederacy, intense sensation with confused or dim conceptions".¹⁰ These distinctions were important aspects of a metaphysics that envisioned the man of faith using his God-given abilities to seek the fundamental truth on high.

Reason and Understanding

The seed of the distinction between the reason and the understanding existed in Coleridge as early as his schoolboy days at Christ's Hospital. J. Shawcross maintains that the precocious Coleridge was "awakened to consciousness of that inward discord which it was the task of his life to explain and resolve, the discord engendered by the opposing claims of the senses and intellect on the one hand, and of what he chooses to call the heart on the other".¹¹ This distinction deserves a thorough

9. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Oxford, 1907, p.164.

10. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Literary Remains, New York, 1853, pp528-529

11. Biographia, op.cit., Shawcross' Introduction, pp. xii-xiii.

examination since it distinguishes what power in man is capable of seeking and recognizing the highest truth.

In a sense, Coleridge seems anxious to clarify this venerable disposition of the understanding and to enhance the reason by suggesting its superior nature and functions. The exalted state of reason is exemplified by its exclusive residence within those creatures created in their Father's image. Reason's first act of faith was to believe in its own high powers in order that it could function freely and productively. It would seem that his philosophy is based on his trust in the universal and rational power of the realizing principle, the spiritual foundation of the whole complex body of truths. It was an indwelling power, an inner light, and the source of all truth. Therefore, we may conclude that all truth, including the truth of religion, is not created by man's intellectualization but is always revealed to man by a higher Source.¹²

The understanding, on the other hand, was the faculty which, although it might receive its data from both within and without, could perceive them only in terms of matter, never in terms of the spirit. It was "a faculty judging according to sense," or "the mind of the flesh".¹³ Much fallacious reasoning was therefore due to the understanding's presumption of the higher nature and functions of the reason.

Since this distinction stands at the threshold of every significant discussion of philosophical and religious questions

12. Aids, op.cit., pp.128,250ff. Cf. Friend, op.cit., pp.32,94, 142, 530.

13. Ibid., Aids, pp. 251,255.

in Coleridge's writings, it would appear to be the central motif for all his thought. Nevertheless, it suggests itself to me, in the ultimate sense, that his positive religious position cannot be interpreted in the light of this formal and convenient distinction. The standard definitions of the reason and the understanding which I have already quoted from the Aids to Reflection and The Friend do not fully reveal the guide-lines for pursuing the development of his positive religious position. Truly to understand and to resolve this problem requires that one see the influence of scholastic tradition, seventeenth century Platonism, eighteenth century rationalism, and German idealism upon Coleridge's thought. ⑨

The scholastic tradition had a theory of mutual relationship between the spheres of reason and revelation; the understanding was not differentiated from the reason as a unique faculty. Revelation was the given, a gift from God to be accepted and believed. It was, however, interpreted to a large extent in the light of reason, which became a negative norm regulating the possibilities and probabilities in the meaning of a given revelation. In short, reason was a natural gift, duly constituted by God, enabling man to understand his commands. Both the Aristotelian tradition of the Thomists and the Platonic tradition of the Augustinians thusly viewed reason as a special power related to Divine Reason and constituted for the purpose of seeking the attributes of God which might be known by natural means.¹⁴

14. Bougler, op.cit., pp.67ff

This scholastic tradition had great influence until it was largely overshadowed in the seventeenth century by the revival of Platonism and the increased scope given to intuition. (10) The Cambridge Platonists, like Coleridge after them, reacted against the new Age of Reason's sharper distinction between the truths of revelation and the truths of reason by enhancing the status and general use of intuition which was then considered to be a higher reason. Though Coleridge was sympathetic to the seventeenth century English idealists' emphasis upon the intuition and the higher reason, his critical faculties enthusiastically drew him to a consideration of German idealism. (10) 15

The terminology and methods employed by Coleridge certainly suggest his great debt to Immanuel Kant, the German philosophical idealist. For our purposes, it is significant to note that Coleridge parted company with the great philosopher in The Friend and Aids to Reflection on the effects restricting pure reason to the realm of phenomenal reality and making the practical reason a regulative norm only, without ontological validity. Yet, Coleridge realized that Kant's critique of the human reason had permanently affected the manner in which the terms faith, reason, and revelation ought to be employed. Accepting the negative element in Kant, he was able to skillfully criticize the decayed rationalism which permeated the English Church. The new perspective of Coleridge's post-Kantian phase on the relationship between reason and religion moved in the direction which legitimately transcends the arbitrary limit set by Kant for religious belief (11)

15. John H. Muirhead, Coleridge as Philosopher, New York, 1930 pp. 54ff.

and experience. Therefore, it occurs to me that it is not the distinction between reason and understanding that would seem of greatest interest but rather the meaning and use of these terms in describing religious experience.¹⁶

Reason was not restricted by the circumstances of time and space, for it was not limited in its functions to the world of the senses and it was not merely a receptive power like the understanding. In The Friend, Coleridge boldly asserts that the reason actually becomes one with the truth that it perceives:

"I should have no objection to define reason with Jacobi, and with his friend Hemsterhuis, as an organ bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the universal, the eternal, and the necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent phenomena. But then it must be added, that it is an organ identical with its appropriate objects. Thus, God, the soul, eternal truth, etc., are the objects of reason; but they are themselves reason."¹⁷

Thus, this direct union of man's knowing power with truth itself and the affirmation of it by the intuition which comprehended "all truths known to us without a medium" was the origin of all certainty in knowledge.¹⁸ Indeed, it was one of the supreme functions of the reason to find the unity by which all truths are related and bound together. It alone could have a direct perception of the one Being in whom all was united. The subordinate nature of the understanding was evident in its ability to work only with particulars without finding their basis for unity. The analytical

16. Bougler, op.cit., pp.84 ff

17. Friend, op.cit., p.144-145

18. Biographia, op.cit., p.190

method of the understanding was therefore considered an important but subservient function of the mind. The reason's synthetic method was much more applicable to the task of acquiring knowledge of the whole considered as one. Muirhead notes that the "one thing fixed and constant, the guiding star" of Coleridge's philosophy was his conviction of "the necessity of reaching a view of the world from which it could be grasped as the manifestation of a single principle, and therefore as a unity."¹⁹ (13)

Since Coleridge's vision included full intellectual and social unity, he extended the power to unify to the imagination as well as the reason. By this expansion he was able to make the principle of unity applicable to philosophy, religion, literature, and art. The belief or faith in reason, being both highest truth and man's knowledge of highest truth, was the real power through which unity was actualized. This was the foundation for all the efforts at philosophic, religious, and social reconciliation that would follow from his religious thought.²⁰ (14)

Reason required the efforts of the whole man for its actualization and affirmation. This meant the free will as well as the intellect, the practical as well as the speculative reason. It is worth quoting Coleridge's explanation of how the reason involved and illuminated the will and the understanding, for this passage indicates strong philosophical and religious understandings:

"...we may in a sound and good sense say that the reason is the ray, the projected disc or image, from the Sun of Righteousness, an echo

19. Muirhead, op.cit., p.60.

20. Charles Richard Sanders, Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement, Durham, 1942, p.43.

from the Eternal Word, the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that when the will placeth itself in a right line with the reason, there ariseth the spirit through which the will of God floweth into and actualizes the will of man, so that it willet the things of God, and the understanding is enlivened, and thenceforward useth the materials supplied to it by the senses symbolically; that is, with an insight into the true substance thereof."²¹

Here we see that when the free will of man accepted the reason, the reason became the spirit, the power by which the whole man was regenerated and enlightened. The reason worked in harmony with the understanding and the will, for it was dependent upon these two faculties in order to exist.

Coleridge utilized the Kantian categories to describe the two aspects of the reason, the speculative or theoretical reason and the practical reason. The former was related to abstract truth. It was the power by which we produce or aim to produce unity, necessity, and universality in all our knowledge by means of principles a priori; it was the power by which we can avail ourselves of the highest truth. Practical reason was related to moral truth and the will of man. It is significant that Coleridge placed his primary emphasis on the reality and value of the practical reason, of reason serving as a guide in the life and activity of the whole man. It was the basis for a rational belief since it comprehends the will, the conscience, and the whole moral being. In brief, practical reason was the organ of wisdom, the source of living and actual truths, and the power by which we can bring the highest truth to bear on the functioning of all

21. Remains, op.cit., p.272.

one's faculties so as to assure a state of harmony and health. This emphasis on the practical reason was prophetic of the practical thrust in the areas of work and conduct found in Arnold and Maurice. Though Coleridge certainly established intellectual guide-lines for the task of reconciliation, he also suggested that all truth had a very pragmatic function and service to render in the ordinary business of living.²²

The Test for Truth

In Aids to Reflection, Coleridge says that reason "affirms truths which no sense could perceive, nor experiment verify, nor experience confirm."²³ He later states that the "true criteria of reality" were "permanence, power, will manifested in act, and truth operating as life".²⁴ In a sense, truth is its own evidence for it can reveal itself as well as falsehood. A sure test is whether or not it met a natural craving in man's whole being and life. Indeed, spiritual truths were authenticated by their relationship to the "wants, cravings, and interests of the moral being, for which they were given, and without which they would be devoid of all meaning".²⁵ In short, it seems to me that the understanding along with the reason and the moral being operate harmoniously in judging truth.

The catholicity of this test is obvious, for the consideration of the fundamental needs of all men limits private judgment and establishes a universal basis for validation. Since mere indivi-

22. Aids. op.cit... pp.241ff.

23. Aids. op.cit... p.252.

24. Ibid... p.363.

25. Remains. op.cit... p.366.

dual desires and opinions do not give sufficient evidence, there is a need for reconciliation between the Protestant tradition's emphasis on the right of private judgment and Catholic tradition's love and respect for the truths of the past. Faith should bring men together, not separate them. Faith, which involved an act of will, was the definitive assurance of truth:

"In the New Testament I have observed that wherever the Father is spoken of, not as inclusive of the World and the Spirit, or as synonymous with the Godhead but distinctively, the Will, as the Source of Being itself is meant...And not a week passes, in which some incident or other does not recall to my mind our Savior's words...No man cometh to me unless the Father leadeth him."²⁶

For Coleridge, man's free will played a significant part in the apprehension of truth. Man's will was subject only to the will of God which permitted truth to manifest itself in a man's life if man would allow it to do so.

Truly a Liberal

Conservative Tendencies

Undeniably, Coleridge often evidenced a conservative tendency. However, I maintain that he respected and studied the past only for the sake of the light which it shed on the present and the future. One must always remember that in the area of abstract truth, for Coleridge, there is no past or present since truth was eternal and unchangeable. Therefore, one of his expressed purposes for The Friend takes on a new perspective, he wished "to support all old and venerable truths; and by them to support,

26. Aids, op.cit., p.363.

to kindle, to project the spirit."²⁷ As we have already noted the spirit, which resulted from the union of the will and the reason, was the power by which the whole man was regenerated and by which the understanding was filled with very practical and timeless light.

Coleridge considered history to be a record of events whose only significance for study lay in its insight into the invisible and timeless fixed laws beneath all facts and governing them. Therefore, the science of history, which was differentiated from the mere reading of history, was a study of the ever-unfolding Providence and of the nature of man, considered in respect to philosophy's light, in order to find the unity which binds all ages.²⁸ It suggests itself to me that Coleridge's emphasis upon "fixed laws" indicates that he believed there were general principles upon which man should seek to build his life. He did not idealize any "golden age" but rather believed in the gradual progress of mankind. Man's progress was not an interrupted development; it was, in fact, comparable to the movement of a river:

"The progress of the species neither is nor can be like that of a Roman road in a right line. It may more justly be compared to that of a river, which, both in its smaller reaches and larger turnings, is frequently forced back toward its fountains by objects which cannot otherwise be eluded or overcome; yet with an accompanying impulse that will insure its advancement hereafter it is either gaining strength every hour, or conquering in secret

27. Friend, op.cit., p.103

28. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, On The Constitution of the Church and States according to the Idea of Each. London, 1848, p.45

some difficulty, by a labor that contributes as effectually to further it in its course."²⁹

Progress was not only a law of life in general but also an essential aspect of religion since it led to a larger freedom of the will. In one sense, it is correct to say that Christian faith indicates the perfection of human intelligence; nevertheless, in another sense, Christianity is best described as a river or a tree which has arresting confrontations as well as moments of fulfillment.³⁰

The Necessity of Freedom

In this era of linguistic analysis, one is particularly sensitive to the difficulties of defining a word like liberalism; this is especially true when it deviates from the denotation of the states and offices of a free mind and spirit in order to include attitudes toward the past, present, and future which may or may not be related to freedom. Nevertheless, it occurs to me that a true liberal maintains, as best he may, an open mind in order that his judgments be not unduly influenced by time factors. From this point of view, one may honestly call Coleridge a liberal for he rejected or accepted things regardless of their dates. His interest in the past was balanced by efforts to discern and resolve the difficulties of the present and future.

In The Friend, we note another facet of his liberalism when he defines the right of criticism as "the free infliction of censure in the spirit of love."³¹ This definition arose in connection with Coleridge's attack upon anonymous journalism which

29. Friend, op.cit., p.362

30. Aids, op.cit., pp.167-180

31. Friend, op.cit., p.116

he correctly accused of violating the freedoms of inquiry and expression. Honesty was an extremely important virtue to him. Not only must we be forthright with others but we must also be truthful with ourselves. Doubt and error must be admitted, accepted, and corrected. Only if one follows these principles can open communication and publication flourish; all must have the right to express the truth as they see it. In the Aids to Reflection, he adds that the Christian would "resist every false doctrine, and call not man heretic".³² Indeed, it is not our calling "to sit in judgment on the souls of our fellows".³³ Rather, we should try to find a common ground with those of differing views by taking care to understand their posture.

As we have noted, theology was the basis for all other study according to Coleridge; nevertheless, it is important to state that other studies must not be excluded or ignored. "The great maxim of legislation, intellectual or political, is subordinate, not exclude".³⁴ Thus, we can see how Coleridge possessed an open and free nature even towards the controversial scientists. He realized all truths were based on invisible truth. By encouraging men to seek the truth in all places, he not only supported scholarship in general but also laid the foundation for the renewed work of reconciliation.

His liberalism is also exemplified in his romantic character. He was attracted by the powers of imagination, the supernatural, and the intuition. These all were entwined with his earnest

32. Aids. op.cit., p.238

33. Ibid., p.216

34. Remains. op.cit., p.326.

love of liberty:"If there were a man in the world, to whom in all things but one I should yield myself inferior, and thank God! there is no lack of such men, yet in that point I would not yield, viz. in my love of truth in the individual, and of liberty in the community".³⁵ This strong love of freedom which pervades his works was probably due, in part, to the influence of the French Revolution.

As Reckitt suggests, Coleridge's major concern was the privileges, the potentialities, and the destiny of man. The "Lay Sermons" exemplify his humanitarian liberalism which vigorously and practically challenged the philosophy of mammon and the professing Christians who offered no opposition, "the distinguished and world-honored company of Christian Mammonists." Coleridge strongly protested against avarice and the whole quantitative and mechanical valuation of life which was fostered by the greedy manufactures and systematized by Utilitarian philosophers. He maintained that men ought to be weighed, not counted. They should not merely be used as a means to the selfish ends of others. Coleridge was most sensitive and concerned about man sinking below his level under the impact of economic principles avaricious in spirit and determinist in philosophy.³⁶

Here we see his philosophical and theological teachings concentrated on defending and glorifying the individual human being and promoting the highest possible welfare. Coleridge said that the two functions of philosophy were "to reconcile reason

35. Sanders, op.cit., p.58

36. Maurice B. Reckitt, Maurice to Temple, London, 1947, pp.50-51

with common sense, and to elevate common sense into reason."³⁷
In short, it seems to me that he wished to unite philosophy and religion in order to identify the abstract and intellectual with the practical and vital business of living. To him, Christianity was not a theory or speculation but a life, a living process. His liberalism did not place implicit confidence in the "feelings" or allow absolute freedom. For him, the feelings actualized the reason, but the reason made the feelings trustworthy. When the feelings were illuminated by the reason and moralized by the conscience, they then could be trusted. Yet, the only sure evidence of any truth was how it functioned in a person's life.³⁸

In summary, we should note Coleridge's vigorous defense of liberty resulting from his basic reverence for man and his rights and powers, his insistence on freedom of thought and expression, and his love for freedom in all its aspects. These characteristics were greatly admired and imitated by Thomas Arnold and Frederick Denison Maurice. They, like Coleridge, opposed the commercial spirit of the day which denied the essential distinction between "things" and "persons". Though Coleridge was nationalistic and social in his teaching, he denounced "that system of policy which would blend men into a state by the dissolution of all those virtues which make them happy and estimable as individuals."³⁹
In brief, Coleridge was not the sort of conservative who excludes all the new nor was he the type of radical who banishes all the old. He was truly a liberal in seeking truth whether old or new and in building the new on the foundation of the worthwhile old.

37. Literaria, op.cit., p.182

38. Remains, op.cit., p.552

39. Friend, op.cit., p.272

The Church

The Vision of Unity

Vidler suggests the three theological characteristics of the Coleridgean movement are a renovation of Christian ideas, an advance in Biblical study, and an enlarged conception of the Church.⁴⁰ We have already mentioned the first, now let us turn to the third. It suggests itself to me that all of Coleridge's thinking is motivated by a burning desire to bring everything into harmony, that is to say, to discover a simple principle to which the mind could relate everything intellectual and social. Intellectually, we have noted that the reason and the imagination both had a unifying function. His desire for social unity was indicated by his opposition to partisanship in all its forms. True reconciliation was not achieved by compromise or tolerance. These merely indicate that one is indifferent to truth. True reconciliation was only achieved by finding the fundamental truth, which underlay various viewpoints, through thinking which would involve right evaluation and depth penetration. The influence of Platonism on Coleridge is most pronounced in this development which assumes that those whose faith has center everywhere and does not care to fix itself to form need not and should not disturb the forms to which others link divine truth.⁴¹

It seems that Coleridge believed that the different approaches to truth ultimately found their meeting point in theology and religion. Indeed, as various truths were unified

⁴⁰Alec R. Vidler, Witness to the Light, New York, 1948, p.27

⁴¹Literaria, op.cit., pp.168ff

through the theological knowledge that civilized man, individual persons were unified with one another through God. Though Christianity probably did not equal divine wisdom, it was the perfection of all theologies and philosophies since it was in harmony with all truth and its benefits were for all men. Thus, we have an explicit basis for a universal fellowship of men with each other and with God, for "even when the Gospel is preached to a single individual, it is offered to him as one of a great Household."⁴² Coleridge's idea of an expanding Christianity was based on his conception of the relation of the reason to the understanding with all its democratic and liberal implications. This concept did not ignore the needs of the intellect in addressing itself first to the heart nor did it ignore the peculiar powers and privileges of the individual. This was the vision of unity.

The Power of the Universal Church

Truth which equaled the knowledge of God was the basis of all unity and the foundation of the universal Church. God must be seen as a loving Father, an ever-present Friend, a God in whom the clear light of truth is united with the infinite strength of a Creator, Governor, and Protector. With such a belief, evil and sin could be overcome by the Christian. His faith was an act of will; indeed, the finite will in all its power and freedom lacked complete power of restoration and must willingly subject itself to the Infinite Will from which it could draw power. Thus, the finite will was our "only absolute self" and the "spiritual part of our humanity" which enabled us to be at union with God.⁴³

⁴² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, London, 1940, p.578.

⁴³ Aids, op.cit., p.193ff

Union with God was our greatest reward and it was a reward in which we could participate during our earthly life. Eternal life was not merely in the future, it had real meaning in the present. This belief allowed Coleridge to bring the conceptions of rewards and punishments out of the region of the temporal and especially the future in order to show their eternal meaning had a practical bearing on the present life of individuals and the Church.⁴⁴

In balancing his strong love of the church with his vigorous nationalism, Coleridge tried to find the truth which lay beneath each, realizing that the reality of the ideal institutions were imperfectly embodied in the historic forms of church and state. Thus, the real progress of each depended upon understanding and actualizing the ideal form. Coleridge believed that the church and the state when ideally considered were seen to be two poles of the same power: "The Christian Church, I say, is no state, kingdom, or realm of this world; nor is it an estate of any such realm, kingdom, or state; but it is the appointed opposite to them collectively, the sustaining, correcting, be-friending opposite of the World."⁴⁵

Therefore, within the nation, there were distinct methods and purposes for each. The State should preserve the property rights of citizens. He felt that its laws were the product of the understanding and were made for specific circumstances and that all men were not equal under them. The Church, on the other hand, must be concerned with the cultural and spiritual develop-

44. Ibid., p.320ff

45. Church and State, op.cit., p.98

ment of its members. Its laws were dictated to man's reason by God, and they were fixed and permanent declaring all men equal.⁴⁶

Coleridge was an ardent defender of the Church of England even though it was not a perfect national church nor a perfect branch of the Christian Church. Nevertheless, it was the best Protestant church since the Reformation for its tenets did not go against common sense. Its crowning glory was its freedom of thought and speech in discovering and proving truth. It was the valid and essential block against a new inundation of the persecuting attitude and the chief hope for a unified Christianity.⁴⁷ One could conclude that the ideal situation would exist when the true state promoted the national church and educated the people towards an intellectual, religious, and social unity.

A Strategy

The thought of Coleridge has been criticized by many men from various perspectives. Yet, even one of his severest critics said that it was "a mistake to suppose that an unintelligible philosophy can have no practical influence."⁴⁸ It seems to me, however, that Coleridge exerted more than a practical influence. In abandoning the traditional apologetics and natural theology bequeathed by the eighteenth century, Coleridge searched out the hidden springs from which the new torrents of Christian thought were to flow. His existential and volitional basis was an excellent antidote to the one-sided spiritualistic views of

46. Friend, op.cit., pp.195-225

47. Literaria, op.cit., p.131

48. James H. Rigg, Modern Anglican Theology, London, 1880, p.117

existence which avoid or cloak the destructive effects of economic institutions on spiritual values. Though he could not develop a detailed system like Kant or Hegel, the infectious quality of his thought did stimulate and excite more organized minds to develop the implications of his suggested principles. He may have lacked the profound power of integration that is necessary to systematize theological insight, but he did suggest a strategy for the work of reconciliation.

THOMAS ARNOLD

Before the Harvest Growth and Development

Thomas Arnold is distinguished from Coleridge and Maurice in that his thought reflects the Oxford rather than the Cambridge motifs. That is to say, Coleridge and Maurice along with Hare, Sterling, Kingsley, Carlyle, Tennyson, and Browning were predominantly Platonic and Kantian in their thinking. They made use of the intuition or the reason as a means of expressing the truth, they did not exalt the intellect over the whole man, they loved progress but sought to reconcile love of change with reverence for the past and its institutions, they considered history in the light of eternal principles, and they had a great deal in common with the Tractarians. Thomas Arnold along with Whately, Copleston, Hampden, Blanco White, Baden Powell, Matthew Arnold, and Jowett represent the Oxford group of what is historically referred to as the Broad Church Movement. The Oxfordians were predominantly Aristotelian, they displayed a faith in formal logic, they exalted the intellect, they were hostile to tradition and Church authority, they read history in the light of the present, and they were out of sympathy with the Oxford Movement.⁴⁹ *

Since Arnold is a somewhat unfamiliar figure, I think some background material is in order. Thomas Arnold was born on June 13, 1795 on the Isle of Wight. His island home engendered a passion for the sea and for knowledge of distant lands and peoples in the young mind of Arnold. In 1807 when he entered Winchester College, this interest in history enabled him to develop a sensitivity to the boastful Romans and an admiration for the

⁴⁹. Sanders, op.cit., p.14ff

impartial narrations of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. At the age of sixteen he was elected a scholar at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he met John Keble and his life-long friend John Taylor Coleridge, the nephew of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In three years he earned a first class in classics and was elected a Fellow of Oriel College where he met Copleston, Davidson, Whately, Hawkins, and Hampden.⁵⁰

During this time, Arnold developed ^{an} anxious inquisitive mind. His scrupulously conscientious heart caused him to be troubled by the Articles of Religion; in fact, he doubted the proof and interpretation of the textual authority, especially the doctrine of the Trinity. He liked dialectics, philosophy, geography, and history. Though he was not adverse to poetry with less of imaginative than reasoning power. In argument he was bold and vehement almost to presumption. His mind was vigorous, active, clear-sighted and industrious. His temper was easily roused to indignation, however, he was appeasable and free of bitterness. Though somewhat deferential to authority, he loved what was good and great in antiquity without any real inconsistency. He easily became angered by what he deemed ungenerous or unjust to others rather than by any sense of personal wrong. According to Stanley, he was a devout, pure, simple, sincere, affectionate, and faithful friend.⁵¹

Life at Laleham

In 1818 Arnold was ordained deacon and settled in Laleham near Staines where he took several pupils. In 1820 he married Mary Penrose. While his eight years at Oxford developed his

50. Dictionary of National Biography, New York, 1885, pp.113-114

51. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, London, 1844, I, pp.21-24

general lines of character and opinion, these eight years spent at Laleham would expand and mature his perspective. Arnold's personality change from the high spirits and warm feelings of youth to a fixed earnestness and devotion which possessed his whole heart and will. Here we find the emergence of a deep consciousness of the invisible world and of that power of bringing it before himself during his most active engagements which constituted the peculiarity of his most religious life. Indeed, his most common acts evidenced the depth of his religious convictions, a vivid realization of the truths of the Christian Revelation. His penetrating insight always took cognizance of the operation of something more than human, whether in his abhorrence of evil or in his admiration of goodness. Indeed, Arnold always seemed to be wrestling with satan. There was a certain distinctiveness and intensity in his love and adoration of Christ. For Arnold, Christ was "the image of the invisible God ...in Him is represented all the fulness of the Godhead until we know even as we are known".⁵²

The years at Laleham were spent in studying philosophy and history. Julius Hare introduced Arnold to Niebuhr's History of Rome and thereby stirred his interest in historical criticism and German literary thought. His letters from this period point up his lively sense of social evils conjoined with his historical insight. This is exemplified by his remark: "It is our own fault if our greatest trials do not turn out to be our greatest advantages."⁵³ He realized the necessity for great alternations in the Church Establishment and strongly sensed "the want of

⁵² Ibid., p.25ff

⁵³ Ibid., p.45

Christian principle in the literature of the day." He ardently desired non-partisan Christianity, wishing that men "could be disciplined to a uniformly Christian spirit, and appear to uphold good principles for their own sake, and not merely as tending to the maintenance of things as they are."⁵⁴

In an 1827 letter to Dr. Whately, we note that Arnold has similar concerns and motifs to Coleridge:

"...try to apply the principles of the Gospel to the legislation and administration of a state. It would begin with a simple statement of the end of man according to Christianity, and then would go on to show how the knowledge of this end would affect all our views of national wealth, and the whole question of political economy; and also our practice with regard to wars, oaths, and various other relics of the elements of the world."⁵⁵

These words to Whately indicate that Arnold's religious feelings and convictions had clearly come into focus. The close interpretation of all the aspects of his being — spiritual, moral, intellectual, and emotional — was the key to his character.⁵⁶

The central truth of his life, held not as a dogma accepted from without but as the satisfaction of a craving within, was the union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ Let us now investigate the ramifications of Arnold's admiration of truth and goodness centered in Christ as they emerged in his thought and actions while he was headmaster at Rugby.

54. Ibid., p.47

55. Ibid., p.48

56. Norman Wymer, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, London, 1953, p.66ff

57. D.N.B., op.cit., p.114

The Essentials of Arnold's Religious Thought

The Coleridgean Influence

Fundamentally, one may note three common points of agreement between Arnold and Coleridge. They were upholders of liberty in its varied postures and its diverse applications. They believed in broad learning and endeavored to promote it. They were concerned about reconciling the religious sects in order to achieve Christian unity. Within and beyond these broad principles, we can see various points of concurrence. Like Coleridge, Arnold trusted in the power of the mind to cope with the problems of life. He was an active apostle of "light", often being accused of pure rationalism. Yet, he states that he did not desire to be dogmatic like a Pope. As a teacher, he was concerned with teaching students how to think, not what to think. He did not want Rugby men to be of one school of opinion; rather, he hoped they would develop the power to form independent judgments.⁵⁸

He was also in agreement with Coleridge concerning vigor and independence of thought and speech as principles against the party spirit as well as anonymous authorship. Arnold also felt that one should seek the positive in an opponent's position realizing that this would bring minds into agreement while the negative resulted in destruction or sectarian positions.⁵⁹ These examples certainly indicate that Arnold was influenced by Coleridge to some degree; nevertheless, we must not overlook his discriminating nature which refused to allow him to become any man's disciple. Yet, Arnold did list the Aids to Reflection and Literary

58. Stanley, op.cit., I, p.149ff

59. Ibid., I, p.261 and II, p.141

Remains as among the few English works capable of greatly improving the mind.⁶⁰ It is also interesting to note that when Niehuhr criticized Coleridge's Church and State, Arnold took great pains to insure an honest judgment was rendered.⁶¹ Throughout his writings, Arnold praises Coleridge for possessing a comprehensive and critical mind, being filled with truth, exemplifying the union of the highest philosophy and poetry, and standing in a position unequaled in all England.⁶²

In addition, Arnold exalted the love of truth greatly beyond the mere veneration of the past and acceptance of blind authority.

"An inquiring spirit is not a presumptuous one, but the very contrary: He whose whole recorded life was intended to be our perfect example, is described as gaining instruction in the Temple by hearing and asking questions: the one is almost useless without the other."⁶³

Indeed, the intellect as well as the soul should be cultivated, for its development was the one safeguard against fanaticism. Like Coleridge, Arnold also advocated that the mind should be developed in many areas. Truth and justice, beauty and love, although evil when separate from each other or exalted the one above the other, made up the perfect ideal when inseparably united.⁶⁴

It was a real pity that Arnold had an early death; he died in 1842 just eight years after Coleridge. Neither lived to see

60. Thomas Arnold, The Miscellaneous Works, New York, 1945, p.303.

61. Stanley, op.cit., II, p.193.

62. Ibid., II, p.163-164; II, p.56; I, p.432.

63. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.303.

64. Stanley, op.cit., II, p.64, 90.

the real work of reconciliation bear fruit; nevertheless, their combined influence would affect Frederick Denison Maurice a great deal.

Reason and Understanding

It seems to me that Arnold did not completely comprehend Coleridge's distinction between the reason and the understanding, for Arnold maintained that the understanding, like reason, should judge in Christianity, concerned as it was with a revelation "involving, as an essential part of it, certain historical facts."⁶⁵ Like Coleridge, he was against the subordination of the reason to the understanding and he protested against the employment of the understanding in inquiry for which the data were not supplied by the senses.

"Wisdom is gained, not by renouncing or despising the understanding, but by adding to its perfect work the perfect work of reason, and of reason's perfection, faith."⁶⁶

"Faith may be described as reason leaning on God."⁶⁷

Thus, Arnold could readily hold that the best kind of rationalism embraced man's intellect and the "moral reason acting under God, and using, so to speak, the telescope of faith for objects too distant for its naked eye to discover."⁶⁸

In brief, Arnold followed Coleridge in saying that man is most likely to find the whole truth when his understanding, reason, and faith worked together, Remembering that Arnold's Aristotelian perspective would not incline him to draw the sharp

65. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.268.

66. Ibid., p.270.

67. Ibid., p.266.

68. Stanley, op.cit., p.52.

Kantian distinction between the reason and the understanding, it occurs to me that Arnold emphasized faith and the understanding whereas Coleridge, following his Platonic and Kantian instincts, accentuated the reason.

Arnold agreed with Coleridge that the supreme test of truth was a moral one; truth must be judged in relationship to the will, to conduct, and to action. In his stress of the practical reason, Arnold emphasized the fact that man's great business was to do good.⁶⁹ Coleridge, we recall, believed that the speculative reason could also apprehend the deep things of God. This difference in emphasis was actually to work for the good of both in that Coleridge's thought supplied the necessary theological background upon which Arnold's emphasis on conduct and praise of action could develop. Those who followed were able to blend these two viewpoints in advocating toleration, in the sense of freedom of thought and speech in discovering and proving truth, and in trying to reconcile knowledge and religion, science and faith. Men like Matthew Arnold and Frederick Denison Maurice owed a great deal to their predecessor, it seems to me, for enabling them to combine the necessity for culture and light with an emphasis on conduct and action in their vision of the Church Universal.

Lessons from History

We have already indicated that history was one of Arnold's first loves. In fact, he wrote a three-volume work entitled The History of Rome and edited another three-volume work entitled The History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides. ~~He firmly~~

69. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.295.

He firmly believed that we must understand the past in order to meet the changes and developments of present and future. With Coleridge, he maintained that history should be studied philosophically and that the historian's primary purpose should be to reveal the basic principles that lay beneath the facts, for "if history has no truths to teach, its facts are but of little worth."⁷⁰ It should be studied as a whole in order to discern its modern relevance. He also believed in progress while recognizing certain intermittent regressions. It is interesting to note that he, like St. Paul, sensed a climactic and dreadful importance in his present era:

"...without any presumptuous confidence, if there be any signs, however uncertain, that we are living in the latest period of the world's history, that no other races remain behind to perform what we have neglected or to restore what we have ruined, then indeed the interest of modern history does become intense, and the importance of not wasting the time still left to us may well be called incalculable."⁷¹

This sense of urgency may have contributed to Arnold's opposition to conservatism as an evil and destructive force. Though it seems evident that change was a fundamental principle of life to Arnold, one should notice that political and economic equality was not his ideal. Rather, he stressed the construction of a social order which would promote general welfare and happiness. Like Coleridge, he emphasized the role of equity, not equality, in effecting a collective progress. He also agreed with Coleridge's condemnation of the inadequacy of the present political economy; a commercial spirit which treated people as a means to its own

70. Stanley, op.cit., II, p.250

71. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.293

selfish end was not conducive to the general welfare.⁷²

In summary, Arnold agreed with Coleridge in emphasizing the significance of the past, in seeing the philosophical implications of history, in realizing the importance of the principles beneath the facts, in welcoming progress when it eliminated the useless old, in reconciling the welfare of the individual with that of the group, and in opposing all that would endanger public or personal welfare.

The Church

Co-operation for the Common Good

It suggests itself to me that Reckitt demonstrates a somewhat superficial understanding of Thomas Arnold when he says that Arnold's insistence on Christianity's value as a cultural instrument was unbalanced.⁷³ It occurs to me that one must view Arnold's faith and culture relationship in the light of his general idea of the work of reconciliation. Arnold said that he held "the revival of the church of Christ in its full perfection to be the one great end to which all our efforts should be directed."⁷⁴ To accomplish this great task co-operation was necessary in order "to bring Christ into every part of common life; in Scriptural language, to make human society one living body, closely joined in communion with Christ, its head."⁷⁵ Historical insight was an essential aspect of this revival, for it cleared up some common misconceptions about the church. The form of the

72. Ibid., pp.417-430

73. Reckitt, op.cit., p.60

74. Thomas Arnold, The Christian Life, Its Course, Its Hindrances, and Its Helps, London, 1845, p.ii.

75. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.12

church was not fixed by God from the beginning.

"...the church is not a revelation concerning the unchangeable and eternal God, but an institution to enable changeable man to apprehend the unchangeable. Because man is changeable, the church is also changeable; changeable, not in its object, which is forever one and the same, but in its means for effecting that object; changeable in its details, because the same treatment cannot suit various diseases, various climates, various constitutional peculiarities, various external influences." 76

Not only was the church changeable but also its authority was not to be relied upon, for even the Church of England was far from perfect. Such views naturally caused Arnold to oppose the Oxford Movement in general and Newman in particular. Arnold even suggested that the priesthood was not necessary since the average man did not need an intermediary between himself and God. Those who identified the church with the clergy were in great error. In a letter to Archdeacon Hare, he notes that even the reflective and liberal Frederick Denison Maurice was "infected in some measure with the same error in what he says respecting the right of the Church,—meaning the clergy,—to educate the people." 77

The primary faults with the Church of England were three in number; first, its connections with the aristocracy caused it to neglect the poor; secondly, variance in doctrine caused its estrangement from the basic articles of Christianity; and finally, its government suffered from a lack of democracy. 78 He felt that

76. Arnold, Life, op.cit., p.xliii

77. Stanley, op.cit., p.232.

78. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.224ff

laity were needed in its government, that a popular constitution was essential, and that the bishops should be given sufficient powers.⁷⁹

Arnold strongly believed that the renaissance of the church could be effected by the union of all Christian sects into one body. Right doing, not right thinking, was the common ground upon which all Christians could stand. Indeed, it is a pity to hear such a committed Christian say that he cares very little for theology as such! Nevertheless, who could argue with the main thrust of his contention: "Our notions about God should never for an instant be separated from our personal relations to him."⁸⁰ Even the Bible was not to be accepted as absolute authority, for Arnold maintained that as it was the product of a historic process it should be interpreted in the light of historical principles.

"...a command given to one man, or to one generation of men, is, and can be, binding upon other men, and other generations, only so far forth as the circumstances in which both are placed are similar...The revelation of God to man were gradual, and adapted to his state at the several periods when they were successively made."⁸¹

Realizing that differences of opinion are inevitable and that disunion is, nevertheless, contrary to the Christian spirit, Arnold favored a church, "thoroughly national, thoroughly united, thoroughly Christian," which would allow "great varieties of opinion, and of ceremonies, and forms of worship," while holding to the one common faith or principle of life.⁸² The task of the

79. Ibid., p.121.

80. Ibid., p.455

81. Thomas Arnold, Sermons, London, 1834, II, p.427ff

82. Arnold, Works, op.cit., p.88

church was "the putting down of moral evil" and "the moral improvement of mankind."⁸³ Hence, mere intellectual errors must not keep people apart, since their primary duty is to promote the good rather than the true:

"...the great philosophical and Christian Truth, which seems to me the very truth of truths, that Christian unity and the perfection of Christ's Church are independent of theological Articles of opinion; consisting in a certain moral state and moral and religious affections, which have existed in good Christians of all ages and all communions, along with an infinitely varying proportion of truth and error; that thus Christ's Church has stood on a rock and never failed; yet has always been marred with much of intellectual error, and also of practical resulting from the intellectual..."⁸⁴

Yet, Arnold insists that the good is promoted by and through the application of Christian principles by the man of faith to all aspects of his existence.

The Application of Christian Principles

Arnold remained an eminently practical man all his life, for he labored to bring all his views, however high, into practice. Stanley says that his writings, which were his only means of affecting the nation as a whole, were more like deeds than words. They were not the result of an intention to instruct but more an incontrollable desire to share his own reflective wrestlings. Ecclesiastically, he remained aloof from all parties; while politically, he insisted on giving his undivided sympathy and service only to the cause of all good men and God, realizing that "political truths are not, like moral truths, absolutely certain or identifiable with a party."⁸⁵ As Price notes in his

83. Ibid., pp.446-447.

84. Stanley, op.cit., p.359

85. Ibid., pp.176-183

letter to Stanley, Arnold's speculative elements always indicate a loftiness and unity of his ultimate ends. He had a general insight into the meaning and substance of God's moral government; that is to say, his was a vision of the eternal principles by which we should be guided.⁸⁶

The center for all Arnold's thoughts and actions on social subjects was to be a work on Christian Politics or the Church and State, a work he never had the opportunity to undertake. Nevertheless, his extant writings indicate that he had a lofty vision for Christianity which, if rightly applied, would go far beyond anything which had yet been seen or is ordinarily conceived for the moral and social restoration of the world. Everything he thought and said on this subject seems to have been in answer to his basic question: "Why, amongst us in this very country, is the mighty work of raising up God's kingdom stopped; the work of bringing every thought and word and deed to the obedience of Christ?"⁸⁷

The great cause of this hindrance to the triumph of Christianity lay in the corruption of the Church of Christ, not of the religion of Christ. Since the religion of Christ, in one sense, had done its work by eliciting its eternal truths in the Scripture, the Church of Christ should become a living society of all Christians. This society would exclude the sectarian desire for uniformity of opinion and worship and the priestcraft practices which maintained the principle of separation between the clergy and the laity. The latter was considered the first and basic apostacy by Coleridge in the Literary Remains and by

86. Ibid., p.195ff

87. Ibid., p.202.

Arnold in his various writings.⁸⁸

To restore the Church to the religious principles of Christianity, Arnold suggested several practical actions. The order of deacons should be revived as a link between the clergy and the laity. He suggested the union of laymen with clerical synods and of clergy with the civil legislature. Permission should be granted to civil and military officers in congregations where it was impossible to procure the presence of clergy to administer the Eucharist as well as Baptism. He also desired an ardent restoration of Church discipline including daily church services, frequent communions, the practical application of the doctrine of the communion of saints, and the deliverance of religious orders from the snare of perpetual vows. A society organized on these principles and institutions would be "a true sign from heavens" of the "living witness of the reality of Christ's salvation".⁸⁹

Political and social institutions, being the highest powers of human society, must be influenced by Christian principle if the work of reconciliation and the Kingdom of God were ever to be accomplished. Indeed, we must recognize the fact that the sphere to which Christian principles are most applicable includes the political, economic, and social aspects of existence. Arnold certainly realized that this was all visionary. But believing it to be true and perfect, he hoped that its recognition by others would lead to practical approximations in the course of time. This remained the vision that animated all his exertions, the vision which closed the vista of all his speculations, the

88. Ibid., p.203ff

89. Ibid., p.205ff

ideal whole which might be incorporated bit by bit into society, and the ideal end which each age could more closely approach. In brief, its remoteness only increased his efforts. In its practical manifestations, it was the great idea of which the various aspects of his life were so many distinct exemplifications.⁹⁰

90. Ibid., p.208ff.

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE

The Union of Thought

Growth and Development

Frederick Denison Maurice was born in Normstone, England, in 1805, the son of a Unitarian. His family shifted from a body united in beliefs and interests to one divided not in love but in faith. From the first, we can perceive a great passion for unity in Maurice. Despite the long and somewhat painful religious disputes in his family, Maurice had a basically happy, energetic, and well-ordered home that generated love, loyalty, and obedience. In 1823 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, with a view to becoming a barrister. Under the influence of his tutor, Julius Hare, and his close friend, John Sterling, Maurice was introduced to the new German schools of thought, Platonism, the writings of Coleridge, and the Greek ideal.⁹¹

Refusing to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles and therefore being excluded from a degree and fellowship, Maurice accompanied Sterling to London where he wrote in defense of social reforms, criticizing the Benthamite materialism. Having gradually accepted the Anglican faith, in 1830 Maurice went up to Exeter College, Oxford, and in 1834 was ordained to the curacy of Bubbenhall, Warwickshire. At Oxford, he had been very unhappy as well as very poor. He felt that the need of the world was his need; therefore, he trusted in love, the very nature of the Almighty, as a uniting element. He believed that the Catholic Church already existed "grounded upon a theological truth, possessing a divine organization and endowed with the living spirit."⁹²

91. Florence Higham, Frederick Denison Maurice, London, 1947, pp.11-19.

92. Ibid., p.30

At this time, the influence of Coleridge and Erskine caused him to develop a greater reliance on God and a deepened capacity for loving; henceforth, the goodness of God, not the sin of man, would be the starting point for his theology.⁹³

During his curacy, he wrote Eustace Conway, an autobiographical novel, and Subscription No Bondage, a pamphlet defending the imposition of religious tests at the universities. In 1836 he became chaplain of Grey's Hospital, where he lectured regularly on moral philosophy and wrote his most enduring book, The Kingdom of Christ. Its philosophical, yet fundamentally orthodox presentation of theology was misunderstood and subjected to attacks from all ecclesiastical angles.⁹⁴

The Kingdom of Christ

This profound work illustrates Maurice's thoroughness, wisdom, verbosity, and courage. Its general theme is that Christ is the ground of a universal fellowship among men. In short, we are fraternized in Christ. After surveying the viewpoints of Quakerism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Unitarianism, and Rational Philosophy, Maurice concludes that we can only serve truth by standing for a positive principle. On the other hand, if the positive principle is hardened into a system, it becomes sectarian and destructive. The beliefs and practices of the true Catholic Church are concerned with a spiritual and universal kingdom.⁹⁵

Maurice is anxious to foster constructive principles rather than merely to criticize the shortcomings of others. He feels

93. Ibid., p.31ff

94. H.G. Wood, Frederick Denison Maurice, Cambridge, 1950, p.21ff

95. Higham, op.cit., pp.43-44

that the kingdom will prevail, because it is built upon the perfect love and ineffable unity of Jesus Christ. The kingdom could not be manifest by mere reorganization; it required sacramental bonds in order that individuals submit themselves to a discipline and education in the understanding of all that was involved in the work reconciliation. Society should be based on mutual love, for God's purpose was "to bind men together in one family of which He is the Head."⁹⁶

A Deepened Concern

In 1840 Maurice was elected Professor of English Literature and History at King's College, London; in 1845 Wasburtonian Lecturer, and in 1846; in 1846 Chaplain at Lincoln's Inn; and in 1846 Professor of Theology in the newly created Theological School at King's College. Maurice, who had been deeply moved by the political events of 1848, now became actively interested again in the application of Christian principles to social reform. Acquaintance with John Malcolm Ludlow, the able lawyer and democrat, led to the formation of the Christian Socialists which brought Maurice into close contact with Charles Kingsley, the country priest and novelist. Maurice's orthodoxy was constantly under suspicion and in 1853 his Theological Essays in which he attacked the popular view of the endlessness of future punishment and maintained that in the New Testament the idea of eternity had nothing to do with time, provoked a crisis which resulted in his resignation from King's College. In 1854 he started a Working Men's College in London to promote his socialistic ideals. In What Is Revelation? he made a fierce attack on the Bampton Lectures of H.L. Mansel who had defended theism on the

96. Ibid., p.45ff

basis of the limitations of human reason and by implication repudiated philosophical theology. In 1860 he was appointed to the chapel of St. Peter's Vere Street, and in 1866 he became Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge. One of his final Cambridge lectures dealing with the conscience illustrates his doctrine of life as a matter of social relationships. He pointed up a fundamental Christian paradox when he noted that it is the essential "I" that mattered and yet, that "I" withered if man tried to live unto himself. One only actualized his full personality as he serves the whole fellowship and yet, one's strongest communion must be with God, not men, in order to serve at all. For Maurice, as for Coleridge and Arnold, God was the living God. ⁹⁷

The Essentials of Maurice's Religious Thought

The Obvious Debt

The discussion above suggests many motifs which are common to Coleridge, Arnold, and Maurice. To be Sure, Maurice received, modified, and passed on with new force and life much that was initiated and developed by Coleridge and Arnold. Like Coleridge, Maurice gave up Unitarianism without losing sight of all its teachings, for he emphasized the fact that God is essentially one and one attribute was His "absolute, unqualified love".⁹⁸ The most obvious influence, it seems to me, from both Coleridge and Arnold is the mode of thinking; their opposition to systematization and their way of using the mind illustrate this common

97. Ibid., p. 117 ff.

98. Frederick Denison Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ, New York, 1843, p. 133.

characteristic. Maurice maintained an interest in various projects generally associated with their names, especially Coleridge's name. He certainly employed their methods and ideas in various practical enterprises of his own. Nevertheless, it suggests itself to me that this inheritance was always accompanied in Maurice by a determination to discriminate, translate, and alter all doctrines in accordance with his own judgments. Yet, it seems to me that most differences are of degree and tend to arise from situations of development or expansion.

The Universality of Spiritual Truth

Theology, for Maurice, was "the protector and basis of Morality and Humanity".⁹⁹ Differing somewhat from Arnold in placing truth even above goodness, he felt that "this Truth was to be found, not in abstractions or ideas, but in the very being of God in His relations with man".¹⁰⁰ He approached all truth by beginning with God, for truth is found in the Person of the Deity. He believed that the object of his life was to exhibit truth "not in notions but in a person".¹⁰¹

Maurice believed also that his vocation was to show how society was to be "regenerated by finding the law and ground of its order and harmony...in God".¹⁰² Like Coleridge, he felt we do not have to comprehend truth, apprehension was alright and a mysterious delight to the soul. He also maintained that the

99. Frederick Denison Maurice, Theological Essays, New York, 1871, p. 223.

100. Ibid., p. 227.

101. Sir John Frederick Maurice, The Life of F. D. Maurice, London, 1884, II, p. 241.

102. Ibid., p. 137.

deepest spiritual truth belonged to all men. It occurs to me that their aim was to assert that the truth upon which the universe rests is not something which men make with their minds, but that it is invisible, immutable, infinite, and an eternal force revealing a living God. Truth, for both of them, was essentially spiritual; it exists and operates and cannot be ignored. The greatest faith was not the simplest, because truth could only be achieved after much toil. In undertaking this task on a high intellectual level, Maurice agreed with Coleridge that the only fruitful method of metaphysical investigation involved the distinction between the ~~reson~~ and the understanding. Indeed, Maurice had faith in the ~~resaon~~ as the universal faculty which deals with the spiritual truths and mysteries. It was essential for our direct and immediate communion with our Maker. Yet, man must not allow the fact that his reason gives him the power to know God serve as an excuse for worshiping himself or his own reason rather than the supreme Reason.¹⁰³

In a sense Coleridge's doctrine of the reason found an active, consistent, and resourceful champion in Maurice. Maurice found in it the basis for his faith in man's efforts to penetrate further the secretes of the eternal truths, his conviction that most abstract truth comes to have practical bearing once it was recognized by man, and his vision of a Universal Church resting upon the foundation of spritual democracy.¹⁰⁴

103. Ibid., I, pp. 295-352; p. 517ff.

104. Maurice, Essays, op. cit., p. 209.

Another Liberal

Maurice was considered to be a conservative for the same reasons Coleridge was by many false interpreters. He had great respect for history and the past which things he also considered in the light of philosophy and theology. He thought of history as the record of God gradually educating the race, for in it he saw infinite goodness and wisdom "guiding men by various processes, in various regions and ages, into the apprehension of that which by their constitution they were created to apprehend".¹⁰⁵

Facts were secondary for Maurice since principles were the important factors in determining the eternal verities. Maurice felt that a reformation was essentially a recovery since all ages were united in the eternal. There was no past, present or future where the eternal truth was concerned. Hence, the golden age was not any one age, but the eternity beneath all ages. It was as close to one age as to another, and it could be shared by all ages equally.¹⁰⁶

The liberal tendencies of Maurice are many. His conviction that theology and history did not exclude other approaches to truth is exemplified by his respect for the productive inquiries of science as seen in What Is Revelation?¹⁰⁷ His respect for an open and free nature and his opposition to exclusiveness were supported by his belief in truth as the chief concern of men.

105. Frederick Denison Maurice, Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy, New York, 1890, p. 279.

106. Frederick Denison Maurice, The Friendship of Books, and Other Lectures, New York, 1889, p. 295.

107. Frederick Denison Maurice. What Is Revelation?, London, 1859, p. 58ff.

His liberalism was manifested in several practical forms. Thus, we see that Maurice was not only a philosopher theologian but also a man of action. Coleridge's thinking was practical, but he remained primarily a thinker rather than a doer. Arnold emphasized right doing over right thinking, but he also remain in the thinker category except for a few experiments at Rugby. Only in Maurice do we see the light of reason radiated in the practical realm of existence. Therefore, his work in education and social reform and against the commercial spirit that disregarded human values sprang directly from his theological beliefs.¹⁰⁸

The Christian Socialist Movement certainly indicates the liberal nature of Maurice's guiding principles. He encouraged and desired full power by the members to express all that they believed, and to make what they believed the foundation of their acts. He also wanted their full freedom to unite with all those whom they found it expedient to bring into the circle, all men of honest purpose, whatever their intellectual confusions might be. ¹⁰⁹

Maurice was truly a great Churchman in vision and achievement; he had a passionate desire to follow and to be led by the whole truth of God. His Christian Socialism greatly awakened our understanding that it is not what we do but what God is doing that matters. Indeed, he was a pioneer because he refused to succumb to the modernism of his day.¹¹⁰ He represents a unity which

108. Wood, op. cit., p. 151ff.

109. Maurice, Life, op. cit., II, p. 33.

110. Maurice B. Reckitt. Faith and Society, New York, 1932, p. 84ff.

many of his contemporaries missed or excluded. For him the basic truth was the fact that God had acted before man was called upon to act and that His word is given, therefore, first in the indicative, not in the imperative. Two major results of the 1848-1854 Christian Socialist Movement were that a link been established between the Church and the people where the connection had been the weakest and that Maurice's theocentric principle grew: "the Will of God should be recognized in all human affairs, public, and private".¹¹¹

The Church Universal

Like Coleridge and Arnold, the quest for unity was a dominant^m interest in Maurice's life. He refused to align himself with any party, for he felt that all could be reconciled by finding the truth in different opinions, not by toleration and compromise. Yet, Christianity was the highest theology and the only real basis for a universal spiritual fellowship. Indeed, all of Maurice's beliefs are united in the Universal Church. It was not a dream, for it actually exists, it always has and it always will. To be sure, the groundwork for any permanent and effective unity must be theological as far as Maurice is concerned, for God is the only foundation for the Universal Church. In fact, Maurice rejected Arnold's view that the foundation should be on some practical doctrine concerning human life and conduct which was close, rather than on God who seemed far out of reach. He opposed religion which only professed notions "about" God by substituting it with theology which had to do with faith "in" God and which had direct knowledge of God as He really is. Christ, therefore,

¹¹¹. Reckitt, Maurice to Temple, op. cit., p. 91.

is "the center of unity to each man and to all men".¹¹²

Maurice saw the Cross as "the meeting point between man and man, between man and God".¹¹³ Man must know God before he can really know himself. This knowledge of God is available to all men and is the only real basis of fellowship. His fundamental theological maxim was that we "cannot discover God, He manifests Himself and thereby we see what we are, what our relationships are, what we are to seek, what we are to hate".¹¹⁴ In summary, Maurice was confident that it was the will of God to bring men into unity, that underneath humanity there existed a redeeming and sustaining power, and that the unity of mankind would at last be manifest at the coming of Christ in glory.¹¹⁵

112. Maurice, Life, op. cit., p. 168ff.

113. Maurice, Revelation, op. cit., p. 351ff.

114. Maurice, Friendship, op. cit., p. 273.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

With the religious thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge we witness the birth of a new era of Christian theology which incorporates both an existential and a volitional motif. In an age when the evaporation of natural law as a basis for power in world was all but complete, at least in England, Coleridge suggested a fundamental strategy by which the man of faith could approach the structures of society. To enable committed Christians to operate within society as a whole, a vision was essential in order for men to actualize their Christian principles in an uncommitted society.

In answer to Rationalism and to the spiritualistic conceptions of life, Coleridge declared that the living God of Christianity was immanent, loving, involved, incarnate and with his people. This idealistic approach also maintained that the Church of Jesus Christ universally existed, that the truth of this assertion was available to all who would have faith, and that each individual human being could enjoy the intellectual and social unity which resulted from union with the God of love. Though some would judge that this Christian idealism merely deals with the "ought," it suggests itself to me that Coleridge, Arnold, and Maurice, in one sense, would boldly assert that they were, in fact, dealing with the "is".¹¹⁵

Thomas Arnold emphasized the practical necessity for "doing" as well as thinking. Only through action could the dangerous gap

115. Alden D. Kelley, Christianity and Political Responsibility, Philadelphia, 1961, p. 73.

between the religion of Jesus Christ, to use Arnold's idea, and the so-called Christian Church be closed. Christ must be recognized as the converter of man in his culture and society since the church itself is a changeable institution in the world. Frederick Denison Maurice develops this insight in order to suggest that the church is not so much "confronting" the world as it is being "with" and "in" the world. Indeed, Christ is not the church's only; He is the Lord of all the world.

In this light the church is not viewed as a voluntary society but rather as the creation of God. Hence, the church universal is built upon the very nature of God Himself, upon the union which he has formed with his creatures, and not upon human inventions or even faith. It occurs to me that these insights laid the foundation for much of the ecclesiological discussion of our own day. Perhaps, as Archbishop Ramsey suggests, we have not generally recognized this fact because these men and their work, being radical and progressive as well as intellectually engaging, ~~was~~ ^{were} "somewhat apart from the controversies and leading conceptions of the time..."¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Ramsey goes on to note the occurrence of this thinking from Gore to Temple.

In the recent work entitled Sounding, we also see a very recent indication of the validity and of the value of the vision and strategy of these nineteenth century prophets. Dr. Vidler notes that Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are "theologians who in a different idiom have said in our own time much the same as Maurice about religion as man's most subtle substitute for God's

116. Arthur Michael Ramsey, An Era in Anglican Theology, New York, 1960, p. 112.

own revelation of Himself.¹¹⁷

Those who long to see the church more truly representative of Jesus Christ, more in touch with the real world in which we live, more immediately aware of the new knowledge and the changing scene of today, will do well in investigating the thought of these men. I think that it summons us not so much to stand by the church as to become the Church. Their work was a work of reconciliation. They realized the difficulties and the complexities involved in their task. Yet, they believed that we move towards reconciliation as we grow and progress as thinking and social beings.

117. Alec R. Vidler, Soundings, Cambridge, 1962, p. 244.

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